

# ***CPS REFORM WATCH***

***CPS Reform Watch describes the progress made in implementing the reforms outlined in Governor Janet Napolitano's Action Plan for Reform of Arizona's Child Protection System and included in legislation passed during the 2003 special session. This monthly bulletin also is available on the Department of Economic Security's website at [www.de.state.az.us](http://www.de.state.az.us) and on the Governor's website at [www.governor.state.az.us](http://www.governor.state.az.us).***

**January 2004**

***Foster Parent Reimbursement Increase*** – Arizona foster parents are reimbursed by the state for the care they provide to Arizona's abused and neglected children. Foster parents had not received an increase in their reimbursement rate since 1996 (this rate was sufficient to cover approximately half of the cost of raising a child). In December 2003, the state legislature approved funding to raise the reimbursement rate for foster parents. As a result, the base rate paid to foster parents was increased by \$3.75 per day beginning January 1, 2004. Another increase is slated for June 1, 2004. These increases will help Arizona foster parents with the costs associated with opening their homes to abused and neglected children and will enhance Division efforts to recruit and retain foster homes.

***Recruitment of Additional CPS Staff*** – The Division of Children, Youth and Families is currently advertising positions in *The Arizona Republic* and through Monster.com. Additional advertisements are planned through newspapers in the major metropolitan areas in Arizona and other states, rural Arizona newspapers, national industry publications and employment web sites. The Division also is working with the Schools of Social Work at Arizona State University, ASU-West and other major universities in the region to recruit Bachelor and Master of Social Work candidates. Division staff will participate in a number of job fairs locally and regionally. In addition, the Department of Administration recently granted the Division the authority to direct-hire. This streamlines the employment process while maintaining critical safety measures, such as fingerprinting and background checks. A training academy began January 5 and includes 24 future case managers; some of these will fill existing vacancies and others are new positions resulting from the additional funding provided with HB 2024. Training academies are scheduled to begin approximately every 4 weeks to accommodate the expedited hiring process. A list of CPS staff who have left the Division within the past 24 months and are eligible for re-instatement has been provided to the management staff in each District; the District staff are contacting employees they feel are good candidates for reinstatement.

Along with additional funding to support foster homes and ensure a 100 percent investigation rate for reports of abuse and neglect, legislation passed in the 2003 special legislative session also supported and/or complemented programmatic reforms planned in CPS. Below is a description, by major subject area, of the status of some of those reforms.

***Develop a Statewide Prevention System*** – The Division is doing an inventory of prevention efforts to identify gaps, opportunities for blending resources and potential funding sources to address increased needs. DES is working to bring the substantial resources of the entire agency to bear in an effort to prevent families' involvement with CPS, including the expanded use of family assistance and employment programs to prevent neglect.

***Implement a Multi-Disciplinary Response to Reports of Abuse or Neglect*** – Legislation passed in the 2003 special legislative session requires joint investigation by law enforcement and CPS of all reports of felony child abuse and neglect. Although protocols for joint investigations already exist in most counties, the Division is working with stakeholders to review those protocols and ensure that they are uniformly applied. Division staff also are working on co-locating many vital services, such as

law enforcement, behavioral health and domestic violence services, within existing CPS offices. In Winslow, a police officer works in the CPS office at least two days per week. The staff have reported better cooperation during the investigation as a result of having an officer present. They have also been impressed with the resources the officer has brought to bear on their cases, such as facilitation with adult probation and other law enforcement. In February, the Flagstaff office plans to have a juvenile probation officer co-located in the CPS office to better coordinate cases where children are both delinquent and dependent (involved with both CPS and the juvenile courts).

Staff training continues on the Division's new professional risk assessment tool. Together with a new safety assessment tool instituted last year, this will help case managers make decisions about the child's immediate and long-term safety based upon the child's needs and the family's strengths. The risk assessment was developed using best practices and technical assistance from the National Resource Centers for Child Maltreatment, Foster Care & Permanency Planning, and Family-Centered Practice.

***Deliver Timely, Effective Services to Children and Families*** – The Division has worked closely with Behavioral Health Services to ensure that children entering the CPS system will receive an initial screening for behavioral health services within 24 hours. Prior to this, some children had been in care for up to three weeks without having their emotional and behavioral needs assessed. A more timely assessment means that case managers and foster parents have the information they need to adequately serve the child. The Division will continue working with BHS to ensure that the follow-up treatment or services identified in the initial screening are provided to the child and to improve the timeliness of assessment and treatment of behavioral health needs of the families who are involved with CPS.

***Provide Adequate Support for Both Children and Families*** – The implementation of the increased reimbursement rates for foster homes is detailed at the beginning of this bulletin. Earlier this month, Arizona DES was selected by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to receive a \$150,000 planning grant and technical assistance to implement the Family to Family Program. This effort teams foster families, birth families and agency staff in caring for children and rebuilding families. The program includes specific strategies to recruit foster families from the children's communities to maintain their family and community ties, as well as programmatic improvements, such as streamlining the foster parent application process, enhancing foster parent training and using community partnerships to better support foster parents.

***Provide Adequate Support to Those Who Provide Services*** – Efforts to recruit additional staff were described previously. The Division is working with the Department of Administration to implement the salary increase to CPS case managers and support staff, as well as the additional stipends for bilingual and investigations staff. These salary issues should be finalized by the February 20 pay date. All of these improvements will help the Division recruit and retain quality case managers, a critical step in achieving manageable caseloads and a 100 percent investigation rate for abuse and neglect reports.

***Increase Community Involvement in the Child Welfare System and Accountability*** – DES staff have met with the Auditor General, and a team of auditors should be housed at DES within the next three months. DES has begun discussions with the Auditor General on financial and programmatic information that will be reported as the result of HB 2024. Future discussions will involve staff from the Governor's Office of Strategic Planning and Budget and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.

Earlier this month, an organizational change was implemented to have the Deputy Director for the Division of Children, Youth and Families report directly to DES Director David Berns.

Next month, Governor Napolitano is expected to name members to the CPS Reform Advisory Board and the Youth Advisory Board. This will give community members and stakeholders critical input and oversight in reform efforts.

Stakeholders will be kept informed of the Division's progress through the *Reform Watch* monthly bulletin, which will be distributed to stakeholders via email, in addition to being posted on both the DES and the Governor's web sites.